Soham stories from 'A Cambridgeshire Scrapbook' 1897-1990, compiled by Mike Petty

Introduction

Each evening from March 1997 to March 2015 I compiled a 'Looking Back' column in the Cambridge News in which I featured snippets from issues of 100, 75, 50 and 25 years ago. I sought out unusual items relating to villages and areas of Cambridge not usually featured

These stories are mainly from issues of the Cambridge Daily/Evening/Weekly News of 1897-1990. They are by no means a complete record of what was published.

I can supply actual copies of many of these articles – please contact me.

The complete file of 'Cambridgeshire Scrapbook' entries is available to download at bit.ly/CambsCollection

The newspapers are held in the Cambridgeshire Collection together with other Cambridge titles back to 1762. They have a variety of indexes including a record of stories for every village in Cambridgeshire between 1770-1900 and newspaper cuttings files on 750 topics from 1958 to date. I initiated much of the indexing and have many indexes of my own. Please feel free to contact me for advice and assistance.

For more details of newspapers and other sources for Cambridgeshire history see my website www.cambridgeshirehistory.com/MikePetty

This index was produced as a working part of my personal research resources and would benefit by editing. Please may what use of it you may. But please remember where it came from

Mike Petty, www.mikepetty.org.uk email mikepetty13a@gmail.com 01353 648106

12 November 2016

Looking Back: Soham compiled by Mike Petty

1897-1908

1899 Sep 20

Newmarket RDC heard that at Landwade there was a pump that had been erected by subscription, the piping had never been properly fixed and there was now a leakage. Complaints were made as to the indifferent water supply at Reach. There was a spring of good water near the Delph Bridge, which by reason of its being open was often full of tadpoles and other little animals. If a cover were put over it would be a good source of water. The inhabitants of Kirtling obtained a great deal of their water from a dirty pond. The water to certain homes in Soham was filled with dead cats.

1899 Oct 05

Richard Drake, machinist from Sutton, was summoned for permitting a locomotive to be used on the highway drawing more than three loaded wagons. P.S. Hodge said he saw a traction engine in Churchgate Street, Soham drawing three wagons, a house van and a chaff cutter. The driver said that his master had expected they would be stopped. Fined 30s.

1900 May 4th

A most disastrous fire broke out in the centre of Soham which has reduced to a mass of blackened ruins an ancient hostelry, with its contents and outbuildings, a tradesman's shop and houses, & rendered homeless a dozen persons. The old hostelry "The Fountain", with its rooms panelled with oak, and interesting alike to the antiquarian and lover of old-style architecture, stood at the corner of Churchgate Street. It was built mostly of timber and had plaster walls, with lath and reeds between. The firemen succeeded in preventing the fire involving a tall building, used in years gone by as a steelyard, hay and straw weighing apparatus.

1901 Apr 17

A disastrous fire occurred at Soham vicarage. It is really in two parts, the old portion, used by the servants, being connected by a passage with the new wing in which the Rev J.C. Rust and his children were sleeping. The seat of the fire was in the old portion in a room used by the sons of the vicar as a carpenter's shop. The cook and the housemaid were awakened by stifling smoke and clad only in their night attire, climbed on the roof. Practically the whole of the old wing was gutted, the furniture as wells as the belongings of the servants being destroyed

1901 Jul 31

Suggestions that the model cottage is not so comfortable as the old-fashioned thatched dwellings must not be accepted without some qualification. Surely nobody will contend that the thatched cottage, with a low roof and a ladder for a staircase, is more comfortable than the brick cottage. Very few have inspected the model cottage on Mr Crisp's estate at Girton or they would not have committed themselves to such an unfortunate pronouncement. It is nothing short of a grave scandal that such large centres as Cottenham, Swavesey and Soham are in danger in the summer of suffering from a short water supply.

1901 Nov 21

Mr Benstead of Swaffham Prior asked Newmarket RDC to take over parts of the road which have been metalled by the Fen Reeves. Some councillors spoke in opposition. Mr Tebbitt said there was pretty much 100 miles of such roads in Soham and he would move that Soham Fen roads be served likewise. Mr Munsey said he would do the same as regards Fordham. It was decided to refer the matter to a committee to thoroughly consider and report.

1902 Sep 20

Soham Grammar School is keeping abreast of the times and of modern educational requirements. Under the present headmaster, Mr W.H. Mould, the number of scholars has risen from 20 to nearly 70. Though of ancient foundation a progressive spirit pervades the establishment as is evidenced by the addition of a laboratory and workshops. Here the art and woodwork master, Mr F.V. Worthy will instruct the boys in woodwork and the use of tools. The object is not to turn out carpenters; it is to train the boys' faculties so they will have an intelligent appreciation of the value of work and of workpeople.

1903 Sep 30

Jonas Leonard of Soham told magistrates he brought the growing crop of oats on Mr Mainprice's land and shocked it and raked between the shocks. The shocks were carted and the rakings left on the land with four sheaves, two at each end of the field to show the land was not cleared; this was the custom of the parish. But he saw some 30 people, mostly children, clearing the field, taking litter for pigs. The magistrates warned the defendants that they went on the land without authority and must not run such a risk again.

1904 Aug 15

Mrs Sarah Ann Edwards told the Soham court that she had several occupations and besides being a midwife and a washerwoman, prepared dead bodies for burial. She purchased a pony and lent it to her husband who went to Fordham with it. He got very drunk and went to the Windmill where the made a bargain for the pony with William Harlock. It was taken from the cart and replaced by another one. This was a broken-down creature, only fit for the knacker's yard. When her husband got home she went in search of her own animal and found it in the Ely pig market. Harlock said he had bought it from her husband

1904 Sep 14

Four Soham passive resisters were before the magistrates for non-payment of the education rate. They were the Rev Shreeve Baptist minister, Rev H.C. Gant the Congregational minister, C. Fyson a wheelwright, and Frederick Owers. He was aged nearly 80 and had always paid his rates before but objected – 'I expect I have got to pay, but that does not make a just thing of it any the more for that'. Rev. Shreeve said it was no pleasure for him to come to court; it was obnoxious as he had always been a law-abiding person but he had a conscientious objection to paying the rate

1905 Jan 18

The largest and most destructive fire at Soham in recent years took place at Cross Green. It originated in the roof of a thatched cottage occupied by James Boon, a horsekeeer. Although when first noticed the flames might have been covered by a bushel measure, they increased in size at an alarming rate and very soon the whole block was in flames. It spread with such rapidity that firemen had to leave their work and slide down the ladders with all possible speed. The cold was intense; there were several degrees of frost and the icicles formed on the burning buildings within a foot of the flames after the hose had been at work a few minutes. The town was empty, trade was at a standstill and everyone flocked to witness the destruction of the Old Malting. 050118-18b

1905 Jan 25 c

An inquest on a Soham lad heard that his death was due to his ignorance of the dangerous nature of the liquor of which he was partaking. Gambling had been going on at the George and Dragon and the King's head at Soham. The licensees had provided dice and bottles of spirits as prizes. It was by these spirits that the poor lad was poisoned and as long as spirits are readily procurable such accidents must occasion.

1905 Apr 05

Magistrates refused to renew the licence of the George and Dragon public house at Soham. There were 14 fully-licensed public houses, 18 on beer-houses, two off beer-houses and one grocer's licence for a population of 4,230 people – Soham must be a thirsty place, they commented. In the High Street there were eight pubs within 400 yards. The former landlord had allowed gambling for spirits on the premises and proved the dice and dice-box, but he had already been punished and it was not a disorderly house. 05 04 08

1905 May 05

Residents in Soham have to 'fetch a pail of water' from the public pump when they need it. But Mrs Brown of Bushel Lane complained: "It was a great trial to me. My back was so weak that carrying the pails would send pains through it of an excruciating character. It was when my first girl was born that I became so very ill. She was a very weakly baby and fretted continually. I became so knocked-up that I had to have someone in to do my housework. One night my husband returned to find me in a pitiable plight. Then I decided to take Dr William's Pink Pills and I have not been ill since". 05 05 13

1905 Nov 02

A halt occurred in Newmarket High Street when race traffic was at its height and Earl Cadogan's motor brougham was slightly damaged. In slowing up the driver of a vehicle backed into the motor car, smashing a pane of glass in the side of the hood. At Soham a horse and cart belonging to a man named Johnson, bolted. He was hawking vegetables when the animal took fright at a firework exploded by some children. It was brought to a standstill by Mr Saberton the butcher but one of the shafts of the cart was broken. 05 11 02

1906 Feb 12

A crowd of 300 packed Soham court to hear a case involving a heifer. It had been taken to the washlands on which Isleham parishioners are allowed to put their cattle but had later gone missing. The loser said: "When I went to bed I asked the Lord to show me my heifer, and he showed me it in John Collen's ground". But he swore it belonged to him, and his wife remembered it being born. The case lasted until 7.30, the court remaining crowed until judgement was given. 06 02 12a-c

1906 Mar 06

An assault-at-arms at the Conservative Hall, Soham, included a ten-round boxing contest between 'Happy' Pinfield of Newmarket and 'Porkie' Archer of Soham. Pinfield proved himself the best boxer and hardly a minute had elapsed ere Archer had enough; he dodged through the ropes and hit behind the screen amidst the laughter of the spectators. Later Steve Canty guaranteed to defeat three men in nine rounds, but only two accepted the challenge and were quickly disposed of. 06 03 01b

1906 Jul 07

The Queen's Arms beerhouse at Soham sold 30 barrels of beer a year. It was an old house, very low and in bad repair. There was little trade – during one afternoon the landlord drew one pint of beer and drank two himself. Soham was an increasing town, 200 new houses having been built during the last ten years but there were 34 licensed houses, one to every 124 persons. One was The Old Brewery whose trade was done among the low class labourers in the evenings – Sunday especially. Also: Cambridge - The Beehive, Golden Cross, Sawston – Flower Pot – all closed 06 07 07a & b

1906 Nov 16

The Compensation Authority considered claims for premises closed under the Licensing Act. They included a beerhouse at North Brook End, Steeple Morden, The Plough at Comberton, the Red Cow, Landbeach and Carrier's Cart at Lt Shelford. Potton Brewery said they would lose £275 if the licence of a beerhouse at Heath Road, Litlington was taken away but accepted

£240 as compensation. However Benskin's Watford Brewery refused £251 for the Sun in Newmarket Road, Cambridge. also Stapleford Dolphin, Waterbeach Haunch of Mutton & Plough & Horses, Sawston – Flower Pot, Willingham – King William IV, Bottisham Plough, Soham Queen's Arms and Old Brewery, 06 11 16a & b

1907 Jan 01

The County Road Committee decided that roads to Meldreth and Soham railway stations and carry a considerable amount of traffic. They should be accepted as main roads when brought up to a proper standard by the District Councils. But the Bourn to St Neots, Over to Willingham and Newmarket to Moulton roads only carried light traffic and should not be taken over. A bend at Kirtling is dangerous for motors but Lord North is willing to give up a strip for widening the road provided the county erect a fence. 07 01 17c

1907 Mar 13

The Bell Inn, Isleham owned by Messrs Treadway and Percy, Soham brewers, was built of reed and plaster and was in a good state of repair. It included a taproom, cellar and three bedrooms with a clubroom and stabling for four horses. The tenant had a van and went out to feasts, which helped him make a living. There was also a weighbridge which weighed 100 loads a year; the charge was eightpence and the carter allowed one pint of beer out of the money. There were 16 licenced premises in the parish with four within 200 yards – the Cock White Horse and Griffin alehouses and the Crown beerhouse. 07 03 13a & b

1907 Jun 15

Mr Hobbs of High Street Soham has found a gigantic mushroom measuring 50 inches round the head. All but the stalk was cooked and eaten and was of excellent flavour. Mr Hobbs preserved the stalk and a good many people called to see it. 07 06 15

1907 Aug 15

A terrible accident occurred at Prickwillow when a governess car, containing seven people, overturned and all the occupants were injured. Three were natives of the village and had hired a trap at Soham for an outing. On the return they mistakenly drove on to the old bank, at one time the main road to Ely, but now seldom used. As they attempted to turn round the horse, car and occupants went down the bank and into the dyke, a fall of quite 14 feet, being engulfed in the thick black mud. One lady is not expected to recover. 07 08 15a

1907 Dec 24

Mrs Mary Boon who kept a lodging house at Soham told an inquest that she could put up eleven men at her place. The deceased lodged occasionally with her and had been coming backwards and forwards several years. He was a steady man but had a glass of beer when he could afford it. His trade was to sharpen saws. Nobody knew his name but he answered to 'Bill'. He had paid 4d for his night's shelter and left for Ely but was found beside the road and died at Newmarket workhouse 07 12 24

1908 Jul 31

Twenty-six licensed houses are to close, magistrates decided. They include the Robin Hood at Litlington, Chesterton Long Reach,, Swaffham Prior's Uncle Tom's Cabin and the Three Jolly Watermen in Waterbeach Fen. But the Fox in the Wood at Soham and the Cock at Isleham were spared after Police Superintendent Winter failed to appear to give evidence. CWN 08 07 31

1908 Sep 04

During the past few days several well known people have passed away at Soham. Ebenezer Taylor, cab proprietor, died at the advanced age of 78. He was in business for over 40 years & before the opening of the Ely and Newmarket railway line, 28 years ago, the supply of vehicles and horses was much more important than at the present time. Fyson Johnson,

blacksmith, was in his 67th year, Martin Bradshaw, bricklayer was 73, and both were trustees of the Wesleyan Chapel. This succession of deaths has cast quite a gloom over the town. CWN 08 09 04 p8

1909 03 12

The Fox in the Wood beerhouse at Town's End, Soham, was an old house built of brick, lathe and plaster. The only room used by the public was a taproom but there were four bedrooms and stabling for two horses. Nearby were The Holmes and the King's Head alehouses and the Travellers' Rest beerhouse, all of which did better trade. There were 32 licences in Soham for a population of 4,230, magistrates were told. 09 03 12

1909 07 02

A number of village public houses are no longer economic and should close, magistrates were told. They included the Bell at Meldreth, Melbourn's Old Elm Tree, The Royal Oak Fulbourn, The Lamb and Lord Nelson at Cottenham, British Queen Chesterton, Queen's Head Dry Drayton, Over's Hare and Hounds, Balsham Five Awls and Soham's Fox-in-Wood. But the licensee of the Green Man at Swavesey said he did not want to leave it. CWN 09 07 02

The Rev J.C. Rust has been vicar of Soham for 35 years. It is a straggling town, for its population the longest in England. He was a bachelor when he came to the vicarage and did the first of the many wise things he has done as an example to his parishioners – he married his cousin and had five children. He has been very active: when the Parish Council was formed in 1895 he became the first chairman. He also took up Esperanto and preached the first sermon ever in that new language at Geneva in 1896. CWN 09 07 02

1909 07 04

Reach church was built on the site of the old one in 1860 and for 40 years schooling has been held there. But the Board of Education had signified its intention of withdrawing recognition so a new school is being built on the site of the old Ship Inn to accommodate 80 children. The architect is Hubert Hunt of Burwell and the builder J.G. Cowell of Soham. CWN 09 07 04

1909 07 16

The news of the death of Charles Cole Ambrose of Barway was received at Ely with the deepest feelings of regret and quite a gloom was cast over Soham where he was particularly well-known. He was a son of Cole Ambrose of Stuntney the best-known agriculturalist in the Eastern Counties and reputed to be the largest wheat-grower in England. He will be greatly missed in the neighbourhood of Fordy Farm where he was regarded as a good master and a kind and genial gentleman. CWN 09 07 16

1909 11 12

An exciting incident occurred at the Mill Drove Railway Crossing near Soham. Charles Aspland was coming from his farm bringing a portable horse-drawn hen house filled with young fowls which had been turned out some days on a corn field. One of its wheels got jammed between the railway line and the wooden floor of the crossing and try as he would he could not get it free. Suddenly the Newmarket special train with racehorses for Liverpool dashed into the henhouse splintering it across the line and killing 35 of the fowls. The engine sustained no damage whatsoever. CWN 09 11 12

1910 03 11

The Coach and Horses pub at Fulbourn contained a bar, a parlour, smoke room, living room and five bedrooms upstairs. The yard had stabling for seven horses, a disused brewery, pigsties and a chaff-cutting house. The cellar in the basement was unfit for use and the premises generally in a bad state of repair. Next door was the Six Bells, a large house with extensive premises which could supply all the requirements of the neighbourhood. There are

five fully-licensed houses and five beer 'on' licences to cater for 124 inhabitants as well as the 526 inmates of the asylum. 10 03 11b also Soham Black Horse - 10 03 11c

1910 08 12

The landlord of the Horse and Groom beer house Soham was summonsed for serving beer to six men on the afternoon of Hospital Sunday. Alfred Jefferies said they knocked at the gate at about 3.17 o'clock. He opened it and asked where they came from. One said 'Burwell', which was over the three mile limit, and others said 'the same'. But in fact they came from Fordham. The court dropped the charge against the landlord but police prosecuted the drinkers who had wrongly represented themselves to be travellers. 10 08 12f

1911 02 03

Richard Wallace, actor of Soham, applied for a theatre licence for two months for the acting of stage plays in a fit-up theatre in Mr Gimson's meadow at Linton. He had played 'East Lynne' and 'The Silver King' and had a company of ten people. Any money that was taken would largely be spent with local tradespeople. But the Congregational Minister said he did not see why anyone should not spend his money at a theatre unless he was in debt. There was no need for these theatrical performances in the village. The magistrates refused to grant a licence. 11 02 03d

1911 03 24

Serious accidents Vinery Row sewage trench, Fen Ditton tumbril cart, motor bus and GER van Hills Road, Soham tree-cutter $-11\,03\,24$

1911 05 19

George Leonard of Soham Fen was with his father carting straw. They stopped to tighten a rope and following a flash of lightning both were thrown to the ground along with their horses. Young Leonard was killed instantly. The crown of his straw hat was torn from the brim, a large piece of leather blown clean out of his right boot just above the ankle and the collar of his mackintosh had a long slit in it. The lightning also made strange markings on his back which resembled the branches of a tree. 11 05 19b

1911 07 14

The Crystal Palace pub in Mill Road Cambridge was difficult to supervise, police reported. The only way to get to the back was down a narrow passage at the side, the door of which was always locked. The Bell in Northampton Street was in bad repair with terrible accommodation, the house was damp and the only cooking facilities were in an underground kitchen. The landlady of the Chequers Impington said it was the only place to get a good glass of beer and if it closed many a man would become a teetotaller. The Gravel Diggers was right down in Cottenham fen but there was a considerable amount of labour at certain seasons. The tenant had held the licence for 30 years. It was renewed 11 07 14 also Priory Tap, Melbourn White Horse, Guilden Morden Black Swan, Dry Drayton Prince of Wales, Swavesey Middle Watch & Black Horse, Soham Black Horse

Men on John Bailey's farm at Wicken had built up a stack and were about to 'top it out' when two boys (children of a clergyman who was staying in the village) were observed to run away screaming and flames were seen coming from the top. Willing helpers, including the maids and matrons of the village, assisted with water from the wells and Soham brigade did its duty so smartly that they put out the flames using water from the pond on the Green leaving the centre of the stack standing 11 07 14d

Robert Fenn Taylor, coachbuilder came from London to Clay Street, Soham seven years ago; first meeting of creditors - 11 09 01a

1912 02 23

The funeral of Canon John William Cockshott was held at Burwell. After leaving Cambridge University he'd hoped never to return to the fens but was called to the curacy of Soham. From there he went to Burwell where he established the Mission Church. He built a school at Reach, which has since been consecrated, and also restored the church at Landwade. In 1885 he was appointed vicar of Stretham where he remained until 1906 when he felt unable to fulfil his duties to his satisfaction. On his retirement he went to live at Shelford where he did active pastoral work. 12 02 23a

1912 03 29

Soham railway station master G.F. Vipan dies – 12 03 29i

1912 04 12

Soham church organist and choirmaster, William Feather, retires due deafness – 12 04 12 & a

1912 04 19

Soham smallholders association annual meeting – 12 04 19g

1912 07 19

Soham sale estates of Frederick Owers – 12 07 19i

1912 09 13

Hasse Road Soham in bad state with ruts, drainage into Mere defective – 12 09 13a

1912 11 29

An Inquiry heard that a new footpath had been laid from The Crofts to the Mereside, Soham, and the old one stopped up. Benjamin Bradshaw, a basket maker of Pratt Street, said there was no right of way over the land but it was just for people who had allotments. But James Westley, auctioneer, said he had used it frequently and it had never been obstructed. Rev J.A. Wilson said the land had belonged to the church and congregation of Isleham for 200 years. The Parish Council should come to an agreement to take it over. 12 11 29b & c

1913 01 10 CIP

Soham theft of horse and trap of Walter Elsden

1913 01 24 CIP

The heavy and almost continuous rains are having a serious effect in Soham. The whole countryside is saturated and ditches full to overflowing. At Greenhills water is level with the cottagers' gardens and paths and roads are impassable, the outlook is extremely serious. A hundred acres are flooded due to the unsafe condition of the river bank which is in a state of collapse. Farmers fear grain will rot in the ground, some having been covered with water since before Christmas. The roads are in shocking condition, the heavy farm traffic having cut them up to such an extent it is impossible to cycle over them

1913 01 31 CIP

Band of Hope Union annual meeting head that David Moore ('Uncle David') had given 78 addresses and 75 lantern lectures which had been attended by 5,198 adults and 10,865 children. The lantern shows had been very popular and were an excellent method for giving effective teaching in a pleasant way. Numerous visits had been paid to villages and Wood Ditton, Cheveley, Dulling and Soham Fen had joined the Union. Numerous pledges to abstain from drinking had been given. 13 01 31 p9 CIPof

1913 02 21 CIP

Soham parent kept sick children at school for fear of attendance officer, died Soham schoolchild inquest

1913 02 28 CIP

Soham Nursing Association midwifery fees Suffrage meeting Soham

1913 03 07 CIP

Fire Quy Fen Common Soham

1913 03 14 CIP

Soham parish council meeting – allotments, path along river bank, cemetery curator's role, hand bier

1913 03 21 CIP

Cambridge Independent Press, Ely Gazette, Soham Gazette, Huntingdonshire Herald, established over 100 years. Advertise your wants in old-established papers which are thoroughly well-known and have a genuine and increasing circulation. Classified columns include situations vacant and wanted, domestic servants and horses, carriages and cycles. Charge for 16 words, one insertion sixpence, three for a shilling. Miscellaneous: Conjuring entertainments – apply Boleyn Entertainments Bureau, Magdalene Street. Pig Fattening recipe, sixpence – Tulin, Herne Bay. False Teeth Bought, any condition, sixpence per platinum tooth given on vulcanite, 2s.6d on gold – S.Cann, Manchester 13 03 21 p1 CIP # c.04

1913 04 04 CIP

Soham Senior Girls School teacher leaves

1913 04 11 CIP

Soham grange school

1913 04 18 CIP

The enterprising Newmarket and District 'Bus Company plans a motor bus service for Soham on market days departing from the Crown Hotel at 12.30 on Tuesdays and arriving at Newmarket an hour later . On Thursdays they leave from the Market Square for Ely. The vehicles, supplied by the London General 'Bus Companies, present an exceedingly smart appearance, being painted yellow picked out with dark blue. They have electric light and are exceptionally quiet running. The company has already started a service of buses between Burwell and Newmarket, doing three journeys a day 13 04 18 p11 CIP

1913 04 25 CIP

Under Soham 'Commons Rights' people who rent at house for less than £5 a year can place stock on the commons from April 21st for a nominal charge. For geese the fee is two shillings and twopence, donkeys and cows twice that and horses six-and-six. The stock is in the charge of the Fen Reeves. The commons available are East Fen, Qua Fen and Angle Common. Owing to the Shade being unprotected and the road to Ely running across it, a keeper is appointed to stop the stock from straying.

1913 05 02

East Cambs bye-election, meetings Burwell, Whittlesford, Ely, Wicken, Soham. Ely, Sawston, Cherry Hinton

1913 05 09 CIP

Election meetings, Linton, Castle Camps, Shudy Camps, Soham, Fordham, Newmarket , Fen Ditton etc

Suffrage meeting broken up at Soham, Sawston, Fulbourn

1913 05 16 CIP

Soham families leave for Australia

Racoon captured, Soham *

Three Soham men observed an animal lying on some sticks upon the top of a hedge in House Fen Drove. It showed quite a fighting disposition on being disturbed and almost caught one of them with its teeth and claws. It was eventually killed with sticks and stones. On examination it proved to be a fine specimen of the American racoon, weighing 8lbs. It was the size of a fox and had a pretty ringed, bushy tail. It is thought to have escaped from a passing menagerie 13 05 16 p11 CIP

1913 05 23 CIP Soham motor bus trip to London Soham parish council hand bier

1913 05 30 CIP Wicken new carrier service to Soham

1913 06 13 Soham mail trap accident

1913 06 20

An alarming fire occurred on the Qua Fen Common, Soham which resulted in the destruction of two thatched cottages. The roofs were burned quite away and only the walls of the buildings left standing. They were of the ordinary four-roomed type of house with wooden lodges at the back and the thatch upon the roofs had been covered with galvanised iron sheeting. Mrs Clark had raked out ashes from the fire but the flames ran up the boarding into the thatch with extraordinary rapidity. Firemen stripped the roof of its iron sheeting with considerable difficulty but the roof was completely destroyed. 13 06 20 p8 CIP With the opening of the fruit picking season in the Wisbech district comes the migration from Soham of a large number of people who year by year visit the fields. No few than 34 left on Wednesday and others are leaving day by day. But the advent of hot weather has brought fires caused by sparks from railway engines igniting crops along the line from Soham to Ely; no fewer than five broke out on Sunday evening when half-an-acre of hay was burnt.

Soham bee swam on church 13 06 20 p11 CIP

Soham balloon

Soham river silted up

Soham fires on railway, Barway

1913 06 27

Soham feast parade *

P.S. Haylock testified he was near the Cock Inn, Isleham Fen when he heard talking and laughing. He saw the landlord coming from the tap room with four mugs of beer in his hand at 10.27 pm, which was after hours. One man nipped out of the back door but there were six inside, with the lodger. It was a lonely place, six miles from both Soham and Isleham. They didn't often get visits from the police. The landlord claimed they'd refused to leave; they were big fellows and he could not bundle them out. He was fined. 13 06 27 p11 CIP Soham small holdings & p10 Soham pigeon flight

1913 07 11 CIP

William Martin of the Shade, Soham, met with a serious accident whilst corking bottles of stout at Treadway and Percy's brewery. The operation necessitates a considerable amount of effort and while screwing in a cork he wrenched the neck off the bottle. The broken glass cut deeply into the back of his hand. As Dr Cory was away he was taken to Mr C.C. Greensmith's shop who applied first aid. 13 05 11 p11 CIP

1913 07 18 CIP

Soham swimming club sports
Soham court; map publisher's methods *

1913 08 01 CIP

The unfamiliar sounds of wooden clogs have been heard on the pavements of Soham for a large number of holidaymakers from Rotten Stile, Lancashire, have been staying at various houses. The women wore the customary shawls over their heads. Many trippers come year by year, putting up at farmhouses and enjoy the peace and quiet of the fen and farm land after the hurry and bustle of the manufacturing towns $-13\,08\,01\,p11\,CUP$ Soham Grammar School Rennard leaves - English master

1913 08 15

Wicken parish want a railway siding near the bridge in Soham Field - Barway already had one. It was four miles to the station and would be a considerable advantage to farmers. There would be more goods traffic and much that went to Upware would go by rail. Despite recent fires a fire engine was out of the question. But Soham had purchased fire extinguishers which have out a stream of gas instead of water. They might get flames under control and prevent a serious outbreak. It might be possible to buy them by public subscription 13 08 15 p10 Soham Empire cinema start films Conservative Hall

1913 09 12

Soham accidents – horse *
Soham farmer Driver invents grass seed dresser

1913 09 19

Soham cattle market

1913 09 26 CIP

Soham parish council considered buying a new hand bier to carry coffins from the hearse to the cemetery chapel. There was one once but it stood unused and rotted away. But that was a very heavy and clumsy thing. There were several places where they are used – one in Cottenham cemetery. However councillors decided it was an unnecessary expense 13 10 03 p11

1913 10 17 CIP Soham literary institute meeting

Parcel left on train, Soham

1913 10 24 CIP

Soham woman burnt to death

1913 11 14 CIP

Soham fire old lady rescued from bedroom window

1913 11 21 CIP

Soham Salvation Army wedding

1913 11 28 CIP

Soham fire Moden's shop

1913 12 12 CIP

Soham boating fatality, Hamey Farm, Barway

1914 01 16

Territorial recruiting week has seen the Cambridgeshire Regiment up to full strength proving patriotic feeling remains strong and true. The wave of enthusiasm is spreading with recruits coming forward in gratifying numbers in Ely, March and Soham, proving Fenmen are determined not to be outdone in sturdy patriotism by the men of Cambridge. March is experiencing a wonderful revival of military fervour; the numbers had sunk very low but now there is every prospect the Company will be brought up to full strength. – pic Col Louis Tebbutt & Capt H. Littledale, parade outside Gt St Mary's – 14 01 16 j,k,l

1914 04 24

Presentation. — An interesting presentation took place at the Conservative Club (Soham) on Saturday night, when the Vicar (the Rev. J. C. Rust) on behalf of a number of subscribers, handed to Mr. Robert Price a cheque, subscribed by his many friends, as a token of their goodwill. Mr. Price, who is leaving Soham for British Columbia, until recently farmed the Barcham Farm. He and seven members of his family have for many years been closely associated with the social life of the district and Mr. Price's pending departure is a matter of keen regret to his many friends. His eldest son (Robert) is settled in British Columbia. — 1914 04 24 CIPof

1914 06 05

During the steam rolling of Hall Street, Soham, an old well was discovered in a peculiar way. When opposite Mr Shaw's premises the ground suddenly gave way beneath the engine and the driver found he had run over an old well which was covered by a flag stone. The stone broke and below was 18 feet of water and two feet of mud. Had it been a smaller vehicle some damage might have been done. The well was covered over again 14 06 05

1914 06 12

Soham fen Methodist chapel anniversary 1914 06 12 p11

1914 06 26 CIP

Soham feast week p10

1914 07 24 CIP

When W.H. Moult took up the position of head at Soham Grammar School in 1855 it consisted of one room divided by a partition. Only one part was occupied owing to the small number of pupils. That one room had to be used as a dining room and a sitting room for the masters. Mr Mould came from Suffolk and a large number of pupils followed him, many of whom came from Germany, Bordeaux, Normandy and Paris. Within six months he had to have an assistant. Today instead of 12 pupils there is an average of 65. There is a laboratory and woodwork department and a row of cottages alongside have been purchased. No corporal punishment has ever been administered

1914 07 31

Soham grammar school headmaster presentation Soham water supply

1914 08 21

Personal – we are asked to deny the statement that Mr Knight, one of the most loyal residents of Soham, is a German. He served 17 years in the Volunteers and did 18 months' active service in the Boer War, for which he received a medal. Recently he has been on duty guarding the bridges at Ely during the night. Mr Knight is not the only resident concerning whom false statements have been made $-14\,08\,21\,p2$

1914 09 04

Recruiting Royston, Shelford, Bourn, Wicken, Soham, Gamlingay

1914 09 25

Soham train times

Rev Hughes, preaching at Soham Baptist Chapel on the war said there were national sins and national punishments. There was desecration of the Sabbath, the mania for gambling and the great thirst for wealth and pleasure. It might be that God had permitted that Great War to bring them to their knees and he hoped that afterwards people would be flocking to the House of the Lord. Germany would reap her punishment for cruelty and deception. England must never withhold her hand until Wilhelm was unseated and his fleet sunk to the bottom of the sea... Militarism and despotism would be put down by England so that Germany could never lift her head again.

Military roads - Stretham to Soham, one of four to allow different armies to move from west to east at same time without going through Cambridge. The first from Potton though Harston to Whittlesford and Pampisford and on to London Road near Hildersham.

1914 10 16 CIP

Soham – Gilbey kia, identity disk sent home, wounded return

1914 10 23

Belgian badge day, refugees, Louvain arrive, Soham, Burwell, Whittlesford

Photo Patriotic Concert artistes

Private Jellyman of Soham experiences gives a thrilling account of his experiences as a Royal Marine at Antwerp. He was saved from death by an enamel plate his wife had bought for him which he had strapped to his back. A piece of shrapnel struck him but the plate stopped it. 1914 10 30

Soham make socks & shirts for troops

Soham Red Cross help wounded soldiers from trains, Cambridge

Belgians – Waterbeach not help, Soham arrivals, Burwell, Bourn, Cottenham, Duxford, Gamlingay, Gt Eversden, Histon, Linton, Over, Sawston, Swavesey, Chatteris, Cheveley

1914 11 27 CIP

Casualties – Soham

Soham Flying Fund letter

Soham mother refused send son to school because schoolmistress had caned him on the head and doctor certified he unfit to go

1914 12 04

Soham kia Allen, Beaumont; commission

1914 12 11

Soham Johnson kia

Soham elm tree falls on Rose's cycle shop

Soham rifle range at mills proposed

Soham Pte Gillson war experiences

1914 12 25

Soham Clark pow, Canham returns wounded

1915 09 03

Walter Curtis prop portable theatre applies licence Soham

Soham in 14th century – Olorenshaw notes

Soham Dr Fisher takes over Dr Willis' practice

Soham church – how to keep dark during air raids – hold service in Conservative Hall

Soham: Rouse letter

15 09 10

Mail cart accident near Soham Soham stack fire, Hasse Road Casualties include Soham: Peacock kia

15 09 17

Volunteer movement, new corps at Soham

15 09 24

Ely workman falls from new Co-op Society building Soham

1919 03 12

5,000 Acres Under Water. — In consequence of three serious breaks in the banks caused by the recent floods, it is estimated that about 5,000 acres of farm land, including some smallholdings, are still under water to a depth of from 2 ft. to 5.ft. in Cambridgeshire. In places the water stretches as far as the eye can see, cottages, farm buildings, stacks and just the top rails of gates showing out of the water. The breaks which occurred in the banks holding back the water resulted in large areas, hitherto regarded as safe from the inroads of flood water, becoming inundated. The damage has been most extensive and in some cases tons of produce, particularly potato crops, have been rendered almost valueless. The places where the banks gave way were (1) at Barway, on the Soham Lode, (2) at Waterbeach Fen, on the river Cant, (3) at Stretham and Thetford Fen, on the Old West River. The worst break was probably at Barway, where the bank apparently gave way from underneath, after being undermined by the water. Huge portions of the bank were torn away by the rush of water and can be seen now dotted about in the floods like little islands.

1920 08 18

Soham Qua Fen old lodge destroyed whilst burning wasps nest – 20 08 18

1921 06 15

Fens roads dispute Soham & Isleham Bank Drove – not a public highway – 21 06 15c

1922 06 07

The monthly meeting of the Newmarket Rural District received a petition from Robert Leonard and 22 others living at The Cotes, Soham, asking the Council to extend the water main an additional three-quarters of a mile. In view of the great shortage of pure water in the locality of Soham and the comparatively close formation of the cottages with their 121 inhabitants, their application was one not only of necessity, but reasonable

1922 Jun 20

The annual church parade organised by the Soham Fire Brigade and Friendly Societies, in aid of Addenbrooke's Hospital, was held on Sunday, and once more upheld its reputation as being one of the leading functions of its kind in the county. Large crowds attended the proceedings, and graced by favourable weather, the event was a great success. The decorated car, proverbial to Hospital Sundays, brought up the rear of the procession and depicted a hospital ward. During the last year 11,000 patients had been treated at Addenbrooke's, 170 of which come from Soham, whose contribution during that period amounted to about 8d per head of the population

1923 May 31

A carter of Wicken was charged with cruelty to a horse by working it in an unfit state at Soham. Inspector Charles Taylor, RSPCA, said he was on duty at the Soham railway approach when he saw the man with a cart containing four fat pigs. The mare attached to the cart was lame. Defendant said the bay mare would not have been brought out but that the other horse was taken bad. P.C. Haines gave evidence that the mare was in pain and her foot was hot. Fined 2s.6d.

1923 Aug 24

The formal opening of the Soham water works took place yesterday. Mr Ransom said that Soham could now boast of a pure water supply, which, in view of the fact that less alcohol was consumed than in bygone years, was very necessary. Many would be grateful for the water and he hoped there would be further applications from the inhabitants, so that all would pay their share of the rates. The site of the water works joins the main road to Fordham. Here has been erected a magnificent water tower, substantially built in red brickwork, which constitutes a landmark for many miles around.

1924 Feb 24 c

A number of stormy protests were made by members of Soham parish council. It appeared useless for them to sit representing the parish and to pass resolutions and recommendations to the County Council if no steps were taken to put matters right. The county councillor should be asked to move for the reduction of the salaries of certain officials, owing to the lax manner in which they were treated at Soham.

1924 Apr 26

"A regular hive of industry, without a drone" and "one of the most thrifty and industrious parishes in England" were remarks when presentations were made to the Rev John Cyprian Rust who has carried through 50 years of faithful and devout service as vicar of Soham. Looking back he had seen the closing down of several beer shops and less drunkenness was his reward. People could scarcely believe how thrifty all the women had been. They had learned to live and keep a family on 14 shillings a week, supplementing it by little gains from the commons and so on.

1924 Jun 12

An eleven year old schoolboy was charged with stealing five boxes of chocolates, a quantity of sweets and oranges, and a tin of salmon the property of Mrs Susan Bird, confectioner, High Street, Soham. On Friday night the articles were safe in her shop window when she locked up at 10 o'clock. The defendant was standing against the same pane of the window that was afterwards found smashed. The boy said: "I broke the window with my hand". He had been sentenced at a previous court to three strokes with the birch rod. He was sent to an industrial school until he is 16 years of age.

1924 Jun 20

The inquest took place upon the body of a Soham farmer and publican who was found hanging dead in a granary. His son saw him the previous day and there seemed nothing the matter with him, but when he asked if he would come with him to his work deceased replied he had "water springs" (billiousness). He had been attended for bronchitis and his one trouble was that he could not walk as far as he used to, his legs being rather bad. As deceased did not return for dinner that day he searched for him. The far end of the granary was dark and he was going to strike a match when a boy opened the door and he saw deceased hanging from a beam

1924 Aug 22

Much interest centred in the band concert and sports meeting held on the Vinery Road Recreation Ground, Romsey Town, Cambridge. The band contest attracted five entries – March Railway Silver Prize Band, Manea Silver Prize Band, Royston Town S.P.B., Soham Comrades' S.P.B. and Letchworth Town S.P.B. There were two contests, a march selection, won by Royston, and a test piece when only four points separated the last three bands, the winners being Soham.

1924 Aug 28

The Medical Officer told Newmarket rural council that numerous wells at Soham had been found to be polluted with sewage and unfit for drinking purposes. "At present I have a list of 41 wells all of which have been condemned. As long as these wells are available to the public they will be considered as a potential source of danger. If the council take no action they are accepting a grave responsibility as any may be the starting point of an extensive epidemic of water-borne diseases"

1924 Nov 22

A deputation from the fire brigade attended Soham Parish Council. They reported that when the recent fire occurred at Mr Horley's shop instead of calling the firemen someone forced open the fire station door and took out the Minimax fire extinguishers, one of which was damaged, while another is missing. The standpipe was also removed from its place and put behind the engine. Had it been a large fire this would have caused delay. It was agreed that only the recognised members of the Fire Brigade have the right to open the fire station door

1925 Jan 23

The County Education committee recommended that the proposals for the extension of the existing Soham Grammar School building be not proceeded with, that the buildings be disposed of and that the council sanction the purchase of "Beechurst" and a site of seven acres. The building to be adapted to provide for six classrooms and a chemical laboratory for approximately 160 pupils, and house accommodation for the Headmaster and eight boarders.

1925 May 15

The Ouse drainage question is still a burning topic in Soham. Two bailiffs visited a farm at Soham fen to demand rates amounting to £29. Apparently the money was not forthcoming for one of the bailiffs went over to a barn and taking down a halter which was hanging just over the top of a mangold cutter said, "I seize this". A tall, well-built young lady of 16 also seized hold of the halter, and a struggle ensued during which she struck her arm against the mangold cutter, bruising it. Another young lady then came on the scene and struck the bailiff on the nose, causing blood to flow. Farmers think the Ouse Drainage Board was forced on them by the Government and that Soham is being asked to pay for works which benefit other towns who were not asked to contribute.

1925 May 20

The County Education Committee recommended the purchase of "Beechurst" for the purpose of carrying on a central school at Soham to provide an education of a secondary type for boys of the ages of 10 to 16 years. They also recommend the closing of Soham Grammar School and the disposal of the property. People who were not attached to Soham Grammar School for sentimental reasons would in time become just as proud of "Beechurst". Coun. Beales said that if they could give their boys a good rural education and they could leave and help their parents, that was what people would appreciate.

1925 Aug 25

With regard to water supplies in the Newmarket rural district 83 of the 103 water samples taken for analysis were reported to be polluted. In Soham where about 100 houses were supplied from 56 polluted wells, 53 have been connected with the public water main and now of 1,123 structurally separated dwellings 860 are supplied from the mains. At Bottisham 12 samples taken from different wells at the north end of the village all afforded evidence of pollution. In Linton a new public well has been bored into the chalk & consideration has been given to the provision of a new public well at Milton which it is expected will shortly be proceeded with.

1925 Oct 5

An inquest was held at Soham on the body of a boy aged 3½ who was killed by being run over by a threshing machine. The father said he was a healthy child and had often been with them in the yard and roadway when they were working. He was told an accident had happened and saw his boy lying in the road with his feet towards the grass and his head towards the crown of the road. His little head was

crushed flat. The jury agreed that boys were very troublesome and would not keep away from engines. The only way was to give them a touch of the whip, but that would cause trouble with the parents. The jury handed their fees to the father of the deceased lad.

1925 Nov 26

A Soham farmer was summoned for employing a child under the age of 14 years 'in such a manner as to prevent him attending school at Soham'. The school attendance officer saw a number of children working in a field picking potatoes. The farmer said he was most anxious to get his crop in before the frosts and he employed all the men and women he could get. The school had closed for a fortnight on account of the scarcity of labour so he did not think there was any harm in employing children. He was fined 10s.

1926 Jan 18

The spectacle of a heavily laden steam waggon careering backwards down Fore Hill, Ely, was witnessed by a large number of people. The waggon, owned by Messrs Clark and Butcher of Soham was conveying a large quantity of flour and the driver was unaware that as it was freezing the road surface resembled a sheet of uneven glass. All went well until the waggon had reached the top of the hill but then although the rear wheels were revolving they were not 'biting' the surface of the road. It came to a stop and began to slip back. It gathered momentum and presented a curious sight, the rear wheels revolving in the opposite direction but with no effect. Sliding past Ye Olde Tea Rooms it skidded along the pavement and came to a stop a few yards past the Rose and Crown.

1926 Mar 15

Much damage was done by a fire which broke out in a shop occupied by Thomas Stubbings, a dealer in new and second-hand furniture at the corner of Tanner's Lane and Sand Street, Soham. The firemen soon got to work, but the fire had such a hold that nothing could save the contents so they turned their attention to saving some of the five houses adjoining. There was a shed at the back of the shop in which were stored a quantity of paraffin but by keeping the building wetted this was saved.

1926 Jun 10

A large bus belonging to Messrs Bowyer and Topper of Ely was returning from the Soham Grammar School sports, and was filled with Ely citizens, mostly ladies. Some distance from Stuntney a motor lorry, proceeding in the same direction, made an attempt to pass. The bus driver pulled off to the left but the lorry drove too close, knocking the hub of one of the wheels off. The bus turned to the left and rushed into the dyke, falling on to its left side with its radiator embedded in the bank. The occupants were in a serious plight with seats collapsing and broken glass flying about in all directions. Most of the ladies suffered from shock and it will be some time before they will recover from it

1926 Jun 30

Lively scenes were witnessed when Cambridge was "invaded" by visitors from Soham who came to protest against the sale of goods distrained by the Ouse Drainage Board from Barcham Farm for the non-payment of rates. No one could mistake their "leader", Mr A.E. Elsden, who was attired in "cap and gown" and wore a large buttonhole of sweet Williams, supplemented by a rhubarb leaf. Another wore a slightly battered "topper" and enthusiastic supporters had rattles, concertinas and "screechers". A blind man in charge of a street organ had been hired and did his work thoroughly.

1926 Oct 22

Soham Parish Council say that as their fair and feast were still wanted by the public the question of its abolition did not arise. Enquiries showed that many years ago the tolls had

been taken by the Lord of the Manor, but certainly during the past 50 years he had neither taken tolls not exercised any control. They have no knowledge by what rights the stalls are placed in the highway though a search had been made of old parish books and documents.

1927 Jan 08

A verdict of "Accidental Death whilst in the course of his employment owing to an error of judgement on the part of the driver" was returned on a Soham roadman. He was at work with a steam roller on the Stetchworth to Dullingham road. A motor car came along, ran over the rough gravel and stopped twelve yards passed the roller. This had occurred hundreds of times; if a car came over rough metal in high gear it often stopped. The roadmen always helped & had given them a push. This time the driver, instead of getting into third gear, somehow got into reverse and on letting in the clutch the machine ran back and crushed the man between the car and the road roller.

1927 Feb 23

The dedication and formal opening of the new buildings of Soham Grammar School at "Beechurst" took place in the conservatory in the presence of a crowded assembly. The people of Soham were very proud & jealous of their school. They now had the opportunity for providing a secondary school with a rural curriculum to fit its scholars for a rural career. It showed the value parents attached to the education given in that school as the farmer would keep his son at school just as long as anybody else.

1927 Jun 29

Many will regret the death of the Rev J.C. Rust, Vicar of Soham. In 1863 he was admitted to Pembroke College when there were never as many as 30 undergraduates in residence. They might have excused their absence on the river by pointing to the fewness of their numbers but passed the resolution "That so long as there are 18 men in the college, Pembroke shall keep two boats on the river" and Rust was made cox. In 1874 the college living of Soham fell vacant and he was instituted. He was elected chairman of the Parish Council on its formation in 1895 and appointed a member of the first County Education Committee. He was vice-president of the British Esperanto Association and preached the first sermon in Esperanto.

2nd August 1927

Messrs Hunt Bros, millwrights, Soham, sued Thomas Peake, corn merchant of Littleport, for work done. Defendant owned a mill at Littleport and had there two sets of stones. He needed a new bottom stone and a workman went to the mill and took the dimensions. But some mistake was made and the mew stone was found to be three or four inches too thick. That was a fatal defect. Their case was dismissed.

1927 Sep 21

Sir – The other evening I had occasion to be motoring on the Soham-Wicken road. The increasingly heavy traffic has reduced it to such a mess of pot-holes as to prove a nightmare to the driver. Although the car was carefully driven, more than once it was shaken from one side of the road to the other. Someone suggested that the holes would be filled when there were enough bodies to do so. Unless this road is soon repaired I fear many folk will be described like this: "They drove along the Soham-Wicken road, and, behold, when they arose next morning they were all dead corpses" – Much Perturbed

1928 Jul 13

The Henny Farm, near Ely, was offered for sale by auction. Described as 'one of the best farms in the Ely district' it has the advantage of being close to the Ely and Soham railway, adjoining Barway siding. It has an excellent house and homestead, five cottages, main water and a hard road through the farm. It was bought by auction in 1904 for £13,000 and a

considerable sum has been spent on improvements. Seven years ago it would have made £20,000 at least. But the opening bid was £5,000 and it failed to reach the reserve price of £9,000 – under £20 an acre.

1928 Jul 19

Ely Urban Council considered the advisability of obtaining a motor ambulance. Cases were frequently happening where a person was ordered off to the Hospital at once. Last week frantic efforts were made to find an ambulance but the only vehicle that might be termed an ambulance was being used at a funeral and they had to telephone to Cambridge for one. This was a standing disgrace to Ely. Their friends at March had purchased a first-class ambulance for £880 and Soham had one.

1928 Aug 03

After a long period of inactivity the Stretham Sports Committee was reformed about six weeks ago and the outcome of their endeavours was a very successful show and sports on the Recreation Ground. This was formerly one of the most popular held in the vicinity and should all future events be as well arranged this enviable position will be soon regained. There was not a dull moment in the whole of the proceedings. The cycle events produced some keen tussles between S.G. Scott and W. Johnson and in the running events R.G. King of Soham took the hundred by a close margin.

1929 Oct 10

For 25 years the parishioners of Soham have been aiming to possess a church hall and at last it was formally opened. The building is a credit to the town; it is capable of seating 350 people and has a kitchen. Chairs have been obtained by voluntary subscriptions but a piano and billiards table is still required. There might be tennis courts or a bowling green alongside. The site had been bought in 1912 but then the shadow of the Great War prevented them proceeding until last year.

1929 Dec 10

Soham residents considered two schemes for the supply of light. One was from the Soham Gas Company, the other from Beds., Cambs. & Hunts. Electricity Co. There was little information on the Gas Company scheme; they didn't know whether it would be driven by oil, gas or steam or how long it would take. The Electricity Company would supply current by overhead lines to a substation, it would be installed in a few months and they have an alternative generating machine in the event of a breakdown. This was the one agreed.

1930 Jan 09

A Soham grocer said he had started as manager of the Co-operative shop and then gone into partnership with John Everitt. They had bought a horse and cart and did delivery work, but found no cash. He had then started on his own and did well until the war broke out. Since 1913 five new competitors had spring up, three in Soham, one with motor vans from Newmarket and another from Ely. People also went shopping by bus. He had used some of the money of the Soham Slate Club, of which he was treasurer to pay his debts.

1930 Mar 21

At the last meeting of the Newmarket Board of Guardians important features of their 94-year history were recalled. Originally there were nine workhouses but a central workhouse opened with the removal of the inmates of the Soham workhouse in 1837. It was enlarged and rebuilt in 1902. Whatever else was said of the present Poor Law System which was now passing away, no one could ever say that it was not humane. They had to deal with men and women with whom life had dealt hardly and in no sphere of public service had such a demand for wise judgement and sympathetic action been more forthcoming 30 03 21 a & b

1931 Mar 13

The Conservative's touring cinema vans includes talking as well as silent films. There was a crowded attendance at Soham Fen when the programme started with an Empire film, followed by a humorous cartoon showing how the rising tide of unemployment was stemmed by Stanley Baldwin in the guise of a plumber. There were talkies on the agricultural situation and a tour of a motor works together with pictures of the hardships suffered by town dwellers during the General Strike. The van will visit Croxton, Wicken and Chittering 31 03 13e

1931 Nov 13

The decision of the Theatres Committee not to allow Soham Electric cinema to open on Christmas Day is 'almost tyrannical', one councillor claimed. The public would have a perfectly free choice whether to patronise it or not. It was better than loafing about street corners or drinking in pubs. Some of the pictures were worth seeing, even at Soham. But family circles would be broken and the one meeting in the year would be destroyed. The council agreed that the cinema should be allowed to open. 31 11 13e

1931 Nov 20

Traffic Commissioners considered applications for bus services to Soham. A.J. Bailey operated a service to Newmarket on Tuesdays, chiefly for cinema-goers. He carried 259 passengers between January and June. However his application for a service to Ely was opposed by Ortona who'd started a service in 1921 – it was not a good paying route, the costs were almost the same as the takings. But Mr Bailey said local people favoured him and had "booed the Ortona out of Soham" 31 11 20c

1932 May 26

Bourn windmill worked until about six years ago when the sails were damaged in a gale. It was bought by Mansfield Forbes using money collected at an exhibition of Epstein's 'Genesis' at 'Finella'. Now it has been repaired by Hunts of Soham and will be presented to the Cambridge Preservation Society 32 05 26a

1933 Jan 26

The County Council want to restrict traffic in Minster Place and The Gallery, Ely to 10 mph. This would safeguard the cathedral against vibration caused by heavy vehicles. Mr Tyndall also said his shop had suffered, as did the King's School, especially when the sugar beet lorries went past. But the A.A. said it was used by traffic from Soham to Lynn and the real remedy was an effective bye-pass and to extend Broad Street to Prickwillow Road. 33 01 26 & a

1933 Mar 24

Soham sewage problem – 33 03 24 & a

1933 Jul 03

One of the droves at Tile House Farm, Soham mere is to be made into a hard road, nine feet wide. Councillors inspected a reinforced concrete road made in Huntingdonshire some years ago, which tenants claimed was a success. But it is an experimental project: the sub soil was not the same so it might not stand the wear and tear and they could not claim it would last for ever. 33 07 03 p3

1933 Sep 27

Flying-officer Norman Styche, who formerly lived in Fordham and Cambridge, was one of two men who perished when their bomber crashed at Bamburgh after a successful "battle" against the Home Fleet. Having attending Soham Grammar School he had got books on flying out of the library and learnt all he could. He had previously been in two crashes, but was unhurt in both. 33 09 27

1933 Dec 06

Godwin Hunt was one of the most popular comedians and vocalists that Cambridge has ever known. Born at Soham, he was associated with many famous theatrical enterprises including the D'oyly Carte Opera before becoming Lay Clerk at St John's College. He was the founder, 30 years ago, of the Magpies Concert Party which enjoyed a tremendous vogue when amusements were not so plentiful as today. Up to the war they were a male voice quartet but then it became a mixed concert party who travelled far beyond Cambridgeshire. 33 12 06

1933 Dec 18

Hardening Soham Mere roads – 33 12 18

1934 03 03

Soham Parish Council opposed plans to convert the Grammar School into a senior school at great expense. There was a definite need for a school for the children of local villages who would otherwise have long journeys into Cambridge. It was most undesirable to have boys and girls travelling together by train under no control whatever and many parents would object. 34 03 03

1934 03 29

"War is madness and we are being driven to it by madmen" a peace meeting at Soham was told. Some scientists were now saying there was no serious danger from gas warfare and people would be safe if they went and sat quietly in the bath. But soldiers who had been trained to combat mustard gas had become casualties without knowing they were affected until it was too late. They were being driven into this madness by men who were so stupid that they were virtually insane and they needed missionaries against war to defeat them. To believe anything these days involved a belief in miracles. 34 03 29

1934 07 18

A complaint was received about a wireless set at Downfield, Soham. This was a quiet, rural housing site where the people should be happy and comfortable. But one person had got an infernal machine called a loud speaker and was operating his wireless set at high volume. Such people should be put in the middle of a 40-acre field. Everybody paid the rent and had a right to peace and quiet, so a letter should be sent stating that the nuisance should be stopped. 34 07 18

1935 04 03

Fordham Parish Council had contacted B.C.H. Electricity Company to seek costs for lighting the streets but they had not replied. Soham Gas Company intended to run mains to the village and enquiries were made of them. Any scheme had to be approved by two-thirds of the electorate but a large number of people could not afford to pay their rates now and this would mean another 1s 6d in the pound. 35 04 03

1935 05 01

Plans for the construction of new roads alongside the River Lark from Isleham to Prickwillow and from Tunnel Drove, Soham will shorten the distance to the Beet Sugar Factory by four miles. 35 05 01a

1936 93 26

Sewage schemes Cheveley Park, Soham, Burwell water, Swaffham Bulbeck ditches and Brinkley smells 36 03 26a

1936 11 04

Work will start shortly on a big railway improvement scheme between Soham and Snailwell junction. Six miles of the L.N.E.R., which is at present single track, is to be doubled. A large amount of labour will be required to complete the work which is part of a general speeding-up scheme. The line forms part of the route used by Continental express trains between York and

Liverpool and Harwich. It will mean a reduction in journey time of from two to four minutes 36 11 04a

1937 03 18

Soham Lode breach – photo – 37 03 18b

1937 03 27

The Ouse Catchment Board received a telegram from the King and a letter from the Minister of Agriculture saying they had watched with admiration the heroic efforts made to control the fen floods. Sadly a breach had occurred which led to the flooding of Soham fen. Last year Padnal had asked for a new engine but it had been turned down. As a result the old engine had broken and fens were under water. Unless something was done the South Level was heading for the greatest calamity it had ever known. 37 03 27a & b # c.29

1937 04 05

Fen floods and compensation, new road at Soham Mere – 37 04 05

1937 04 23

The Sanitary Inspector reported on flooding in Sand Street, Soham. The sewer which discharged into the river was nearly choked up with silt and water could only get away very slowly. As it was an old brick drain it would be an expensive and difficult matter to clear and they might have to replace it was a new 12-inch glazed stoneware pipe drain. Soham councillors should inspect it and be given power to arrange for cleaning if considered necessary. 37 04 23

1937 06 10

Nine men who worked on the fen banks at Soham Lode during the recent floods appeared in court charged with stealing a shovel each, the property of the Great Ouse Catchment Board. Several of the men said they had lost their own shovels and took another as 'compensation'. One said he had picked one up and taken it home, burying it in a sack in his back garden after he'd been told he would not get any money for his work. The Board had bought extra shovels which had been handed out before being branded; about 40 had gone missing along with 30 lanterns. 37 06 10a # c.29

1937 06 17

The RDC scheme for the collection of unburnable rubbish attracted criticism. In the old parts of Burwell the lanes were very narrow and it was doubtful the lorry could get along. Some houses had been left and in others the receptacle had been taken as well. The parish had turned down a cheap scheme which worked well for a dear one that didn't. But Barway and the Fen had help to pay for collection in the past and would now be part of the scheme. The outskirts of Soham would be cleared and the dump shifted to a covered dump at Fordham. In the old area collections were made so casually that to call them collections was an absurdity. 37 06 17

1937 10 01

The Great Ouse Catchment Board considered anti-flood schemes costing over £300,000. Work was in progress on the Old West bank between Aldreth Causeway and Willingham flat bridge, and on Soham, Swaffham & Lakenheath Lodes where weaknesses were found during the spring floods. Draglines have been hired from several contractors as have several miles of railway track and over a hundred tipping wagons. At Manea they have opened up another clay pit and started re-facing the bank but have had to cross over several watercourses and make several substantial bridges. 37 10 01a & b

1937 11 26

The banks on the Reach, Burwell and Wicken Lodes should be raised and the main engine drain widened, the Ouse Catchment Board recommended. At Upware the old scoop wheel, engine and boilers should be sold, the building demolished and a new pump installed. Very few banks had broken in the fens in the last 20 years but those at Soham Lode had broken twice in the last 15 years. Last week the slips were very bad indeed. The County Council were pumping water from Soham Mere Farm into the lode - instead they should pump direct into the Cam 37 11 26 & a

1938 07 25

There were many hundreds of acres of sugar beet in the Aldreth area and the condition of the Causeway made a three-horse job out of a one-horse job, County councillors heard. This winter they were likely to have a big increase in unemployment and the Ministry of Transport might give a good grant to improve it. But Government had already contributed to the Twentypence Road. It would cost about £30,000 including the bridge. If the land was a valuable as claimed why did the farmers not supply a road for themselves, as smallholders at Soham had done? 38 07 25

1938 09 09

Soham parish council to sell old fire engine – 38 09 09

1938 10 11

Soham Grammar School reorganisation – 38 10 11b, 12

1939 02 01

Men at Barway worked in mud and water through the night to strengthen the sluice gates which divide Soham Lode from the main river. One large barge loaded with clay was wedged in the mouth of the lode. But when the bank burst huge clods of earth weighing many hundredweights were blown out by the water. The edges of the gap are so sheer and straight that they might have been cut out by a gigantic knife. With the earth went sandbags and all manner of other material used to strengthen the bank. Tarpaulin sheets had been stretched over the top of the bank and held down by weighted sacks. Parts of these are now lying in the water swirling through the gap 39 02 01 & c

1939 02 02b

Throughout the night 300 men patrolled between 3-400 miles of the banks of the Ouse, Cam and Lark. The patrols, equipped with field telephones, are part of the extensive flood prevention scheme organised following the floods of two years ago. News of the gradual decrease in the water level has brought relief to scores of families who had abandoned their houses. A number have returned by boat to Barway and Soham and set about restoring order out of the chaos created by the water. 39 02 02b

1939 02 11

In March 1937 flood waters breached Soham Lode, causing thousands of pounds worth of damage. This year the same bank gave way to the enormous pressure of flood water, bringing a further trail of havoc. Natural seepage and pumps have cleared this away but at Swaffham Prior Fen about 1,000 acres are under water caused through seepage from the banks of the Lodes. Pumps have been going day and night but still farms are isolated and cattle have had to be moved. Distress warrants are being issued for drainage rates but farmers won't pay because they haven't any money 39 02 11

1939 08 04

Cambridgeshire was not likely to be attacked in the event of war: there were no munitions factories and places of military importance. This is why it would be one place to which people were evacuated. Two first-aid parties would be stationed in Soham together with three ambulance depots. There would be mobile first-aid units to carry doctors and nurses to

casualties and four decontamination units, one based at Burwell, Thirty ambulances would be needed and they were trying to get lorries of suitable size fitted up with everything necessary, a meeting was told. 39 08 04c, d

1939 09 27

Blackout offences - Soham fish shop, Cheveley & Burwell houses - 39 09 27a, b

1939 11 22

Soham firemen want payment for attendance at a fire at Wicken on 4th Sept 1939 – 39 11 22c

1939 12 01

Ouse Catchment Board agreed that a pumping plant be installed where the Soham Lode enters the main river. As this was not possible before winter portable pumps should be readied in case an emergency arose 39 12 01a & b

1939 12 20

Soham Grammar School has appointed Stanley Stubbs, Senior Language Master of Gresham's School, Holt to be headmaster at a salary of £600 a year (about £35,000 today). 39 12 20a

1940 01 04

Soham blackout light cases – 40 01 04a

1940 01 17

Soham cyclists – 23 stopped for no lights – 40 01 17a

1940 02 27

Divorce for Cambridge & Soham men (William Rouse) – wife's insanity – 40 02 27a

1940 10 31

Nazis Surrender to Woman. — When a Junkers 88 bomber was shot down: at Stuntney, near Ely, on Wednesday afternoon, two occupants, aged about 18 to 20, threw down their revolvers and gave themselves up to a woman, who was the first person on the scene. The two other members of the crew, who had baled out by parachute, were captured in Soham Fen and taken to Newmarket. The machine had been badly damaged by R.A.F. fighters and was finished off by another fighter. The Nazi pilot crashed on Mr. Owen Ambrose's farm at Quanea Fen. Later, Mr. Ambrose told a reporter "The plane touched down in a ploughed field, jumped a ditch and came to rest in a beet field. The first person on the scene was Mrs. Ashman, who lives at the farm. As she approached the two men, they emptied their revolvers and threw them away. Other men from the farm came up and the Germans were driven away in a lorry by Mr. Brooks." The two who baled out were uninjured.

1940 11 29

Wicken Native's Appointment -Mr. Stanley J. Granfield, a. native of Wicken, has recently been appointed acting headmaster of Chesterton Senior School, Cambridge, while the Headmaster (Mr. G. W, Mansfield) is away on military service. Mr. Granfield will be remembered in the village for his activities in connection with the Tit-Bits Concert Party, the East Cambs. Motor Club and Fordham Rodeo. Gaining a scholarship at the local Council school, he was later at Soham Grammar School and the University of London Goldsmiths' College. He has been teaching in Cambridge since 1924.

1941 02 14

Train derailment,—Due to faulty points, a goods engine and about 25 trucks were derailed on the north side of Soham station about 7 a.m. on Saturday, causing the suspension of services on the Newmarket-Ely line for 12 hours. Driver Cross and the fireman managed to jump clear

from the engine. By nightfall one line was working again, and the speed and efficiency with which the breakdown gang did their work was praised by the L.N.E.R. District Superintendent (Mr. Sutcliffe).

1942 07 10

Married 50 years. — Mr. and Mrs. T. Fuller, of 6 David Street, Cambridge, celebrated their golden wedding anniversary on Thursday. They were married at St. John's Church, Littleport, on July 7, 1892, Mrs. Fuller being a native of that Isle village and Mr. Fuller of Soham. He is 74 years of age and his wife 70. He was a bricklayer by trade, and they came to Cambridge when the New Theatre was being built, Mr. Fuller working on the job. They were members of the Salvation Army for 40 years, and Mr. Fuller has been a member of the Brotherhood for 20 years. Having retired, Mr. Fuller now makes gardening his hobby, and both attend the Mill Road Baptist Church. They have had two sons and three daughters, and have eight grandchildren and two great-grandchildren.

1942 08 21

Police changes, — Police Sergeant Squires, after being stationed at Great Wilbraham for nine years, has, on promotion, been transferred to Soham, being succeeded in the village by P.c. Lane from Harston.

1943 08 06

Snake in Garden.—On Tuesday afternoon a snake 33 inches long was seen in Mrs. Cavey's garden in Hall Street Soham by Miss F. Elsden, who lives next door. On being informed, Mrs. Cavey and a nephew found it under some dried elder, and as it came out Mrs. Cavey killed it with a stick, as she did not know it was harmless.

1943 09 10

Death of Mr. W, Housden.—The death occurred on August 30 of Mr, Walter Housden, of Council Houses, Gamlingay. On his retirement from the Cambs. Constabulary, ex-Sergeant Housden came with his wife to reside in Gamlingay. When taken ill some weeks ago, he and his wife went to reside with their son at Soham, where he passed away to the regret of all who knew him.

1943 11 05

5½ lb potato -A note about giant potatoes had not been in print very long last week before I received a visit from Mr. A. H. Worth, who brought with him a potato weighing over 5lb. (writes Watchman). This was grown on his farm at Soham. I shall learn with interest of anyone who can beat this - but don't send the potato to me!

1944 06 02

Ammunition trains blows up, station and town damaged, scores made homeless – 44 06 02;

1944 06 03

Three railwaymen save Soham – 44 06 03a

1944 06 28

Blazing truck load of bombs – inquest on Soham explosion – 44 06 28

1944 06 30

Effort to Save Town from Destruction,—Driver Benjamin Gimbert gave a graphic account on Tuesday of the efforts of himself and his fireman to save a small Cambridgeshire town (Soham) from destruction when they discovered a blazing wagon in their ammunition train. He was giving evidence at the resumed inquest on the two victims of the explosion, which occurred on June 2, completely wrecking the local railway station and causing considerable damage to houses in the town. The blazing wagon, loaded with 500lb bombs, was nearest the

engine, and after being uncoupled from 50 other wagons was being driven away when it exploded. The fireman and a signalman lost their lives. "As we approached the station," said the train driver (Driver Gimbert, of March), "I saw a fire in the first truck attached to the engine. The bottom of the wagon was ablaze all over. I asked the fireman to uncouple the blazing truck from the remainder of the train and he uncoupled it. The fireman then rejoined me on the footplate. I thought that by pulling away with the blazing wagon, we could save the in-habitants of the town and the station. That was my main worry. As we neared the signal-box, the signalman, 'Sailor' Bridges, appeared on the platform and I shouted to him to stop the mail train. Before he replied, there was the explosion. I think we had travelled 100 to 150 yards when the explosion occurred." Verdicts of 'Misadventure' were: recorded, tribute being paid to the railwaymen's brayery.

1944 07 28

Explosion Heroes Honoured. - Cambridgeshire people will feel a sense of keen satisfaction at the award of the George Cross - the civilian Victoria Cross—to two local men for their heroism in the ammunition train explosion at Soham last month. The awards were announced in the London Gazette. One of the men, Fireman James Nightall; aged 22, of the Hythe, Littleport, lost his life in the explosion. The other, Driver Benjamin Gimbert, aged 42, of 17, Estover Road, March, was severely injured, but was able to travel to Cambridge this week, accompanied by his wife, to receive the congratulations of his superiors on the award. The official citation said: "Gimbert and Nightall were fully aware of the contents of the wagon which was on fire and displayed outstanding courage in endeavouring to isolate it. There is no doubt that if the whole train had been involved, as it would have been but for the gallant action of the men concerned, there I would have been serious loss of life and property."

1944 09 24

Clark and Butcher, Soham, fined after men injured by machinery – 44 09 24

1945 01 26

Soham Mere windmill may be taken over by County Council as an ancient monument $-45\ 01$ 26

1945 04 27

Corn Exchange boxing. — A crowd of about 1,500 saw Eric Hall (Milton) bring off another of his spectacular wins at the Corn Exchange on Monday, when he knocked out John Newman (Cambridge) after the contest had been in progress one minute. The first time Hall connected he put Newman on the canvas. Newman was quickly sent' down" again and, on rising, was unable to keep Hall away. Hall brought the fight to an end with a perfect right to the chin. J. Ryan (Gloucester) beat W. Redit (Soham) on points. Ryan, using his reach to advantage, had the better of the first round. Next two rounds were fairly even, though Redit's generalship, took him out of a nasty situation. In the fourth round Redit carried the fight strongly, but Ryan was sound in defence. Ryan missed badly, but continued to have slightly the better of the exchanges, and he was awarded the decision after a very close contest. In the top-line contest, Jim Anderson (Waltham Cross) outpointed Marcel Ludavino (Free French Navy). Other results: Henry Maguire (Cambridge) beat Sgt. A.g. Norman Boon (Leicester) on points; L.A.C. Tommy Myers (R.A.F. and Leeds) beat Bill Haley (London) on points; Billy Boyd (Peterborough) knocked out Roy Pearmain (London) in the second round.

1945 07 20

Storm—While Cambridge did not feel the full force of Saturday night's storm, the outlying districts were affected. Some telegraph poles were damaged, and two houses, one at Soham and one at Kirtling Green, were struck by lightning. The N.F-S. were called, and the damage caused was slight.

1946 10 13

Soham Cherry Tree pub gutted – 46 10 13

1946 12 06

Railway station £1.2M plan; double single line from Ely Dock to Soham, restore pre-war standards – $46\ 12\ 06$

1947 Jun 02

Yesterday, in the little fen town of Soham, the memory of two railwaymen who three years ago gave their lives that the town might be saved from complete obliteration, was remembered and honoured by Soham people. Local people recalled how in the early hours of June 2nd 1944 fire broke out in an ammunition train standing in Soham station. Driver Benjamin Gimbert of March, and his fireman Mr E. Nightall of Littleport uncoupled the blazing wagon and started to shunt it away from the town. Signalman F. Bridges of Soham was about to warn other rail traffic in the area when the wagon containing high explosive bombs exploded. Soham station was completely wiped out and Nightall and Bridges were killed. On the spot where the station was now stands a pre-fab hut which serves as a booking office, waiting room and control centre. But the match-boarding wall of the hut now bears a brass tablet which tells the story of Soham's escape from destruction

1947 Jun 12

A report by the Bishop of Ely's Advisory Committee on the Care of Churches considered eight churches which were in danger of partial collapse. Typical examples are the fine medieval towers of Soham and Orwell, the interesting chancel of Hatley St George, the roof of Caxton and almost the whole church of Wicken, which is splitting in half. There were also a large number of churches where considerable repair was needed now to prevent serious decay later. Some of the failures could be attributed to soil subsidence or rough weather, but for the most part were due to the accumulation of repairs postponed because of the war

1947 Sep 03

A dangerous-looking U.S. Army 45 Remington pistol – a souvenir of the days when members of the American armed forces outnumbered the local populace - occupied the attention of the Newmarket Magistrates on Tuesday. Since leaving the possession of its former American owner the weapon had survived last year's fire at the Cherry Tree public house, Soham. The licensee (his present premises form the only pre-fabricated public house in Cambs having been destroyed by fire in September 1946), was charged with having unlawful possession of the pistol. The defendant came by the gun in 1944 when some American soldiers left it outside his premises. He expected them to return for it but they did not do so and he eventually forgot about it

1948 May 22

Soham, with its community minded population, can now boast one of the finest hard courts in Cambridgeshire, a court upon which two of the world's leading women tennis players have displayed their skills. Presented by the town by two of its leading citizens, Mr & Mrs E.R. Ennion. It perpetuates the memory of their son who was killed in action in Singapore. It lies in surrounding which have no equal in the whole county and last evening had the honour of being "christened" by Great Britain's two leading women tennis stars, Mrs Kay Menzies and Mrs Jean Bostock. The ceremony was watched by a large crowd.

1948 May 26

A chapter of accident befell Miss Kay Stammers, one of Great Britain's two leading women tennis stars, when she went to Soham recently. The purpose of her visit was to "christen" a hard court presented to the town. Travelling from London by train Kay intended to get out at Cambridge, but overshot her target and found herself in Ely. She booked a taxi to take her back to Soham but it says little for the local knowledge of the Ely taxi drivers for the car went straight through the village - which has one of the longest main streets in Cambs - and on to

Newmarket. Eventually she arrived at Soham, where a mystified crowd awaited, only threequarters of an hour late

1949 Mar 17

Isleham village dramatic society were due to begin a three-nightly run of "Charley's Aunt" at the school hall at 7.30 pm. At 5 o'clock officials from the County Architect's department refused to allow the play to go on as the hall did not meet the stringent requirement of the safety regulations. At 5.45pm the village crier was called out to go on his round giving news of the last-minute bombshell to the disappointed villagers. Bus loads of playgoers were due to arrive from Soham and Beck Row. After a lot of frantic telephoning the buses were cancelled and money refunded.

1951 Aug 16 c

An uncomfortable half-hour vigil by a policewoman, who remained cooped up in a hen house while she kept observation on a number of men on the Soham Recreation Ground, had a sequel at Newmarket court. Three men were due to appear, but not one of them turned up to answer a summons that they "unlawfully did play by way of gaming with cards a game of chance called 'brag'". She said there was a pile of coppers on the ground but they had been picked up before she could reach them. Defendants were fined 10s each and the pack of cards confiscated.

1952 Nov 19

The new Soham police station at the junction of White Hart Lane and Paddock Street is the most up-to-date and first of its kind in the county. Four houses are provided for the station staff and the office accommodation includes sergeant's office, charge room and patrol rooms, in addition to garage accommodation. In charge of the new station in Sgt F.G. Brown who moves from Bottisham to take over from Sgt Miller who has been at Soham for the last five years.

1954 Apr 01

At the moment many Soham people work outside of the parish and the Parish Council are investigating the possibility of introducing light industries. It had been called 'a land of milk and honey' and it was a very prosperous agricultural area, even in times of depression, but every morning traffic left conveying people to work outside. The Downfields area was thickly populated and every one of them were exported elsewhere. For years the parish had up to 300 unemployed in the winter and it was time the Planners be asked to consider provision of light industry

1954 Jul 15

Members of the Band of Hope Union visited the East Anglian Egg Packing Station at Soham which collects eggs from producers over a large area, graded them for quality and distributed them to retailers. The station had started with very little money but by 1953 had a turnover of a third of a million pounds and handled over 11 million eggs. They watched skilled inspectors checking every egg under artificial light, modern machines grading them and stamping each with the official number and saw the electric incubators which can turn out 2,500 chicks a week

1954 Nov 10

A police officer began an inquiry after his curiosity aroused by seeing two boys' bicycles lying on the grass verge beside a fenland road near Soham. As a result 14 children, six girls, appeared in court. A thirteen-year-old girl was charged with having had relations with at least eight boys since 1951, mostly on the way home from school. "This sort of thing seems to be so rife in this district as to show a deplorable state of affairs", the magistrate said.

1955 May 03

Soham's new County Fire Station opened in Fountain Lane. When the County Council took over fire services in 1948 the resources were lamentable. They decided that the rural district must be served first and so had erected the first new fire station there. With this up-to-theminute building goes a modern type of water tender equipped with a short-wave radio and a device for control of fires in standing crops. The old appliance did not carry any water at all. 55 05 03b

1956 Mar 09

The East Anglian Egg Packing Station at Soham handled 27 million eggs last year. It started in 1935 with one lorry for collecting; now it has seven, covering the whole of the county. It is producer-owned and profits go back to members as a dividend and bonus on the eggs supplied. 56 03 09d

1956 May 05

The Diocesan Ringers rang the first peal since the war on the beautiful bells at Soham church. It was J. Burford's composition of 5,040 changes of Cambridge Surprise Royal in keeping in complexity with the methods rung by the famous Soham Youths nearly 150 years ago. They commenced in 1790 and rang until 1830 after which nothing more was heard of their exploits and by 1874 ringing had practically ceased. It restarted in 1924 when, after renovation, a Cambridge Band rang a peal of Bob Major. After the war the bells were condemned as unsafe. Now much has been done to repair dilapidated fittings and no member of the band was unduly distressed on completion of the task, which occupied three hours 10 minutes. 56 05 05b

1956 Aug 01

Proposed alterations to the interior of St Andrew's church, Soham have led to the resignation of the clerk to the Parochial Church Council. He feels it wrong to bring the choir from the chancel into the transept. "The choir is very small and I think the Vicar should have a go at getting a choir before tackling these alterations", he said. It could be heard better in the new position but the seating was uncomfortable. He was the only one with the courage to speak out, others were against but they voted for the changes, said a parishioner. 56 08 01a

1957 Sep 30

Cottenham's new fire station is the third to be opened by the County Council since 1948, following Linton and Soham. They also have a new fire engine with four-wheel drive, now all that is needed is a drill yard and training tower. 100 years ago the village had its fire brigade with an appliance pulled by horses. Now they have the most modern machinery manned by volunteers who could be called away from their work at any minute 57 09 30 & a

1958 Feb 21

Soham – Cambridge bus service proposed – 58 02 21

1958 Mar 13

The Soham Egg Packing Station handled a record 30 million eggs during 1957. Property in Brook Street is being developed to comply with the Factory Act as the present station was overtaxed. Producers should support such societies: there is a need to increase the consumption of eggs and imports could have a very large bearing on the price. 58 03 13a

1958 May 22

The new Cambridge Mayor is Leonard Wordingham, a respected member of the Labour Group. His employers, British Railways, have granted him a year's leave. Educated at Soham Grammar School, he had been one of the best half-backs at Cambridge Town Football Club. He also achieved fame as a cricketer for Trinity Rovers – in his Bible Class days. He is the third Labour Mayor, the others being T.H. Amey and W.L. Briggs. 58 05 22 & a

1958 Sep 15

Soham fire Clark and Butcher mill – 58 09 15

1958 Sep 17

Light industries are needed to stop young people leaving the area. The rate of migration from Isleham had been amazing and 75 people leave Dullingham to work each day. The biscuit factory at Fordham has closed down because transport facilities were so bad that the cost of bringing materials more that outweighed the cheaper cost of labour. There were factory sites at Soham and the council was prepared to assist any firm wishing to move in. 58 09 17

1958 Oct 02

"The reputation of Soham is getting shocking and it is time that the young people learned to behave themselves", a magistrate remarked. "It is getting to the state of a lot of Teddy Boys; if you had differences to settle, instead of creating this awful maul and fight, you should have gone with your father and talked the thing out", he told a couple summonsed after a dispute at the Chequers public house. Fordham 58 10 02 & a

1958 Oct 17

Soham Village College, the sixth of its kind in Cambridgeshire, was official opened. The idea of a building which is a school in the day and a centre of activities in the evening and weekend was developed by Henry Morris, former Chief Education Officer and has helped to shape education throughout the country. The ultra modern buildings serve a population drawn from eight parishes. The day school provides instruction for 460 children aged 11-15 who are taught by 19 specialist teachers. Further educational studies commence this month. 58 10 17 & b

1958 Oct 28

Cambridgeshire Women's Institutes fear the history of our villages will soon disappear in the welter of new housing estates. So they have organised a Village Histories Scrapbook competition to tell their stories from earliest times up to the present day. The histories have been compiled into books, many of them lettered and illustrated by hand. Cherry Hinton's scrapbook was awarded top prize, followed by Soham and Papworth Everard. A special award was given to the small isolated Institute of Chrishall which made an outstanding effort. 58 10 28a

1958 Dec 19

Newmarket RDC has decided to erect units of old persons' accommodation at Soham and Burwell. Each unit will comprise a sitting room with a bed recess and kitchenette together with a small wash basin. There will be communal W.C.s and bathrooms. They will be central heated though there will be a coal fire in the communal sitting-room 58 12 19d

1959 03 14

Mr Cyril Petch of Orchard House, Isleham will shortly leave the village to live in the London area. What his new work will be cannot be disclosed, but it is a job of national importance. He has an astonishing record of public service on Newmarket RDC, Cambridgeshire County Council and as Governor of Soham Grammar School. In Isleham he's been chairman of the Parish Council, Sports and Village Hall committees, playing no little part in getting the magnificent hall erected in 1952. As a farmer he organised the fight for the return of fen land after the war. There are few organisations in the district which did not benefit from his sound common sense and wisdom. 59 03 14

1959 07 06

Professional and amateur horticulturalists have been visiting the premises of J.W. Boyce, the Soham seedsmen. They have flocked to view the beautiful double Antirrhinums which are

now on flower. The seed of these attractive plants were offered for sale earlier this year at £750 per ounce. Mr Boyce is to be congratulated in putting Soham on the map, for there is hardly a city, town or village in the country were Soham seeds are not grown and many gardeners in foreign countries get their seeds from the firm. 59 07 06

1960 02 19

Chinchilla breeding is advertised as a 'profitable hobby'. A Soham lady has been breeding these squirrel-like animals for two-and-a-half years and now has six adult pairs. Two litters are born each year, an average being two or three kits. The animals are fed on vegetarian pellets and drink a lot of water. They are easy to rear and fascinating to keep but are not a way of getting rich quickly. An eight-week old pedigree pair costs £50 and will be worth £250 at ten months. 60 02 19

1960 02 24

Tuck shops will not be banned from Cambridge secondary schools but the City Dental Officer will confer with head teachers to draw up a list of saleable food that was least harmful to teeth. It would be better to control what was sold rather than ban them together otherwise children would bring food into school with them. However the provision of snacks for pupils who travelled long distances was by no means universal – Soham Grammar School gave up tuck shops some time ago with unqualified success, councillors heard. 60 02 24b

1960 09 14

Soham railway crossing Middlemere – 60 09 14

1961 06 30

Mrs Anita Brown of Soham has an unusual hobby – sign writing. Her largest work is now at Chatteris advertising the Traction Engine Rally. It is on a six by four feet piece of hardboard and features a detailed picture of a traction engine painted in Chinese lacquer. A gifted artist, she also tints photographs professionally, enjoys modelling clay and is keen on pottery. When Soham Women's Institute entered the Cambridgeshire Federation's scrap book competition, Anita illustrated their book and designed the cover 61 06 30

1961 11 02

Soham from the air – photo 61 11 02a

1961 12 19

Soham new Eastern Electricity showroom opened – 61 12 19

1962 05 14

Some 28 miles of concrete fen roads around Isleham, Soham, Willingham and Swaffham Prior are to be taken over by the County Council over a period of up to three years. Cambridgeshire Farmers Union had requested they should be adopted and maintained at public expense. The Internal Drainage Boards had agreed to finance the cost of bringing them up to satisfactory standard 62 05 14

1963 02 13

The Rendezvous Club at Soham is to reopen. But liquor can be sold only to club members whose names must be available to police. The Club which opened 15 years ago, is owned by London and Provincial Cinemas together with the Regent Cinema. It formerly had 64 members, of whom a dozen were women, who can play billiards, darts and cards or listen to the juke box. There is one other club, Soham Comrades, but this is for men only. 63 02 13a

1963 02 21

There were a great number of old people in Burwell who needed a Meals on Wheels service Magnetic Devices of Newmarket had offered to provide 10 meals from their canteen each day

and the W.V.S., who used to operate a free soup service, may help again. At Soham they charged one shilling a meal – the price having been reduced from one-and-six when it was found some old people were unable to afford that amount. The cost of producing the meal was two shilling and twopence and the money needed was raised locally. They were lucky to have an excellent band of voluntary workers who went round in their cars delivering the food. 63 02 21a

1963 03 12

A six-acre site between Downfields and the centre of Soham is being considered for allocation to light industry. It would give employment to $300 \text{ people} - 63\ 03\ 12a$

1963 03 27

The Beeching report on the future of British Railways suggests the closing down of 19 stations in the Cambridge area – including three serving the main towns of Haverhill, Saffron Walden and St Ives. There would be the complete withdrawal of passenger services from branch lines, Cambridge-March, Gt Shelford-Marks Tey, Audley End & Bartlow lines. Amongst the village stations closed to passenger traffic would be Histon, Wimblington and Chatteris, Bartlow, Pampisford and Linton together with Soham and Fordham. Services from Black Bank would also cease 63 03 27 & a # c.26.2

1963 04 17

Planners say industry should be established on land opposite the Cherry Tree Inn at Soham. It would employ 300 people, many from the Downfield housing estate. There was a need for a by-pass but this would not come in the next 20 years so something would have to be done about congestion in the main shopping centre. A car parking site had been allocated at the old Grammar School where shops were to be erected on the frontage. The Shade junior school was sub-standard; it will be replaced by a new one off Berrycroft Lane and the Clay Street Infants' school would be rebuilt and enlarged. But they denied claims they did not want further development on the commons as it would be constructing decent roads. 63 04 17

1963 06 04

Soham carnival opened by Norman Vaughan – 63 06 04a

1964 02 14

Soham Grammar School cadet HQ - 64 02 14b

1964 03 18

The Education Committee have decided to change the route of the bus carrying children from Isleham to Soham Village College so that it avoids Fen Road, which parents claim is dangerous. Isleham parish council support the protests about the narrowness of the road and deep dykes on either side. MP Francis Pym also thinks it dangerous and will take the matter up 64 03 18a

1964 04 30

The 'Town Café' in High Street, Soham is a new venture based in a former general stores. It comprises a restaurant at the rear of the premises and a coffee bar at the front. They have been granted a music licence so that a juke box can be installed in the coffee bar. The owner also owns a café at Chatteris. 64 04 30c

1964 05 06

Soham steelyard may be restored – 64 05 06a

1964 05 15

Soham village life photo feature – 64 05 15a

1964 05 30

Soham church gets new lead roof – 64 05 30c

1964 05 30

The roof of St Andrew's church, Soham, is being re-leaded to prevent water dripping on to the new altar in the 13th-century building. The old lead, laid in 1798, was stripped off and taken to Norwich where it was melted and purified with new pig lead added. The roof has also been treated against death watch beetle and fungus and the stonework cleaned. 64 05 30c

1964 07 26

The 'Genial Squire of Soham Grammar School' as Mr C.J. Ford , the second master was termed, retired after 38 years as chemistry and biology master having joined the staff in 1928. Headmaster E.A. Armitage praised his high academic quality, sense of dignity and occasion. He will remain in residence at his home at the bottom of the school drive and will teach occasionally. Tribute was also paid to Mr A. Lawrence the mathematics master who retired after 12 years. When he joined the staff the department was in poor shape, now it is excellent 64 07 26

1964 08 12

Clark and Butcher, Soham – small fire will not affect mill's capacity – 64 08 12

1964 09 03

Passenger services on the Ely to Newmarket line are to be withdrawn on January 4th and Soham and Fordham stations will be closed. Alternative bus services will be provided, though the stationmaster says that the present system is quite adequate to cope with the two or three passengers who use the stations. The line is uneconomic: six trains stop a day during summer but none run at time when a heavy load of passengers could be expected. The staff of 12 at each station will be retained to deal with freight traffic such as scrap iron from Middlesbrough and flowers from local nurseries 64 09 03b

1964 09 04

A journey on the fated Ely-Newmarket railway line shows why it has become the victim of Beeching's axe. The only regular traveller is a British Railway employee who uses it to get home to Fordham. Two people got on at Ely – both BR staff – and the only other passengers were an American couple touring Britain. There was nobody waiting at Soham or Fordham. Sometimes up to 30 people get on the Ely-bound station at Soham before changing trains to Cambridge but mostly only a few people use it. 64 09 04

1964 09 30

Soham Lloyds bank celebrates 60 years business – formerly Capital & Counties – 64 09 30a

1964 11 18

Soham steelyard repaired, weighs corn again – 64 11 18a

1965 01 28

Clark and Butcher grain store Soham – feature – 65 01 28a

1965 03 03

Soham development issues – 65 03 03b, c

1966 04 14

Clark & Butcher open new automated provender mill at Soham – 66 04 14a

1966 06 02

Soham ammunition drama recalled – 66 06 02

1973 Mar 10

An ancient forest of bog oaks has been dug up in a 10-acre field at Soham Fen. A contractor ploughing the field only three inches deeper than usual found his plough catching two or three oaks in every run across the field. Mr John Fletcher who farms the field said; "I've been cultivating this land all my life and only struck the odd one, but this year it is just as if there is a whole forest of them. It has taken four men with two tractors a fortnight to clear the field. Some of the oaks wee 60 feet long and had to be cut into three parts before the tractors could pull them out". A National Farmer's Union spokesman said "The oaks lie at the bottom of the peat soil on the hard sub-soil. By ploughing deeper Mr Fletcher has struck this level". He said: "Bog oaks are not as common around Ely as they used to be as most of them have been cleared. They are several thousand years old"

1973 Mar 28

There is a serious housing shortage in Soham, one of the town's representatives told the annual parish meeting. "We have been striving to get additional accommodation for Soham. We are in a very bad condition as far as houses and bungalows go. The housing list gets longer every month, and we now have a colossal list". Work on Palmer's Field development scheme, consisting of 11 houses and 22 bungalows was expected to start in a month or two. "We hope that early next year we will have some accommodation with which we can help some of these people on the housing list"

1973 May 17

The fens were yesterday swept by the most severe blow this spring, as high winds picked up the lighter peats in the Soham, Stretham and Mepal district, uprooting new sown crops of beet and carrots, which are particularly vulnerable. The blow appeared to be widespread and raged for several hours. There have been two blows so far this spring but neither has caused widespread damage. Last year, more than 10,000 acres of sugar beet had to be replanted after a blow at roughly the same time. A Soham farmer, Mr Guy Shropshire has been using a prototype machine which "plants" straw between vegetable rows to prevent wind damage on his 1,000-acre farm

1973 Jun 23

Two Mid-Anglia farm workers with 106 years service between them will be presented with long-service awards at the East of England Show. Mr Bertie Cowl of Soham can look back on 52 years on the land, most of them working for the same employer. Mr Harry Pryor can look back on an almost unbroken span of 54 years on the same farm at Great Shelford. Mr Cowl was born in Soham Fen. When the late Mr Herbert Bedford took over Fletcher's farm he joined him and has been there ever since. As farming has become more mechanised Mr Cowl has one special regret: "I particularly miss horses", he said. Mr Pryor who is 70 started on a farm at the age of 10 as a part-time cattle drover earning 3d a week. "We used to leave off school at 12 and then I'd run down to the village to take the cows from the fields into the barns for milking". He has never fully come to terms with driving a tractor and still looks back affectionately to when horse provided the power in the fields

1976 Jul 27

It is not very often that one hears of a big building project being completed on schedule but Cambridge builders John Brignell and Co are two months ahead on two major council housing developments at Tanners Lane and Berrycroft Soham. At a time when the building trade in general is going through a sticky patch, Brignells are full of optimism. They have just been awarded two substantial contracts at Fen Ditton, for 218 dwellings, and the King's Hedges estate, Cambridge, for 167 houses, maisonettes and bungalows.

1978 Apr 03

A common language between social service departments dealing with baby-battering cases is urgently needed – that is the main finding of an official inquiry into the death of Soham baby Simon Peacock. The inquiry concludes that there was "an unfortunate combination of weaknesses in communication" between the Suffolk and Cambridgeshire County Councils. The recommendations were accepted by both the authorities involved

1978 Aug 11

A compromise has been reached on the route of the Soham by-pass which will soften the impact on the county's last surviving remnant of the manorial open field system of agriculture. It will help protect the 80-acre Soham Green Hill site which is scheduled as of special scientific interest. It is rich in flowers such as meadow saxifrage, milkwort and five species of orchid and there are valuable old hedgerows and small ponds

1980 Dec 01

Soham Comrades' Band is the new brass band champion of Cambridge, snatching the title from Littleport. Chatteris Town Band came third. Each had to play a march, a hymn and one other work. In the contest for small bands Waterbeach took the first prize, Wicken was second, followed by Cottenham, Haddenham and Burwell. Cottenham took the Cook trophy for the highest marks in the march with the Ernie Avery memorial trophy for the highest marks in the hymn going to Waterbeach. 80 12 01

1981 Sep 25

It has taken British Rail 37 years to honour two heroes of an ammunition train explosion at Soham, but now two inter-city locomotives are to be named after Ben Gimbert and Jimmy Nightall. Relations and railway officials will gather at March railway station for the ceremony. Violet Gimbert, Ben's widow, said 'Why didn't they do this when he was alive?' 81 09 25a & b 81 09 29

1982 Aug 16

Greens of Soham new giant cold stores – 82 08 16

1984 05 16

The Queen gave her royal seal of approval to Cambridge's multi-million pound Grafton Centre when she unveiled a plaque to marks its official opening. Cheering crowds queued for hours to glimpse her. A fanfare performed by the 20-piece orchestra from the Manor School greeted the royal party. After the opening the queen spoke to many of the children and shop staff. Earlier hundreds were outside the station for the arrival of her train, pulled by a locomotive named after Mr Jim Nightall, the brave footplateman who saved Soham from disaster by unhitching a blazing bomb-laden train during the war. 84 05 16 p12

1984 05 23

Two faded photographs in the smart office suite at Ivor Searle's Soham premises keep alive the memory of the founder of the firm and the little wooden-fronted workshop at Wicken where it all began just after the war. After starting an engine servicing business Ivor died in 1956, leaving his wife and two small sons. Their mother managed to keep the firm idling gently until the boys were old enough to take over. Now they have moved to new workshops and are among the top 20 engine reconditioners in East Anglia. 84 05 23 p20

1984 06 12

The widow of Soham railway hero Benjamin Gimbert is putting up his medals – including his George Cross – for auction. Mr Gimbert's bravery prevented Soham from being blown skyhigh by a blazing ammunition train during the Second World War when he and Jimmy Nightall uncoupled one truck from 50 before it exploded. Sotheby's say the George Cross might fetch £4,500 which Violet needs to buy a flat. 84 06 12 p12

1984 07 11

Anglian Water is to replace an old-fashioned pumping station at Soham Lode and hopes to give away the 44-year-old engine to a preservation trust. It was built by Ruston and Hornsby of Lincoln and has to be hand-started and hand-lubricated when running. Diesel fuel is delivered by barge because access is difficult and spares are hard to get hold of. 84 07 11

1984 07 18

The Leys School is admitting girls to its sixth form for the first time this autumn. Amongst the first will be Julia Fairey from Linton and Helen Sherwood who is head girl at Soham Village College. Not all the boys are enthusiastic about their arrival and others are jealous of the shiny newness of their accommodation in a special boarding house with attractive study bedrooms. The girls will live in a semi-protected environment without the freedom of a sixth form college but in a more liberal atmosphere than the usual girls' boarding school. They will not be allowed out on weekday evenings without special permission. 84 07 18

1985 02 25

Artistic roller skating was demonstrated at the Kelsey Kerridge Sports Hall. Most of the skaters started when the Bury St Edmunds Rollerbury opened three years ago and since then several groups have been formed in village halls. Gail Jolley of Soham took up artistic skating with her daughter Laura and has already passed three exams. Eventually it is hoped it will become recognised as an Olympic Sport 85 02 25

1986 08 08

Fox Wood Place sheltered housing, Soham – 86 08 08

1986 09 25

Ben Gimbert and Jimmy Nightall have long been folk heroes on the railway following the ammunition train explosion at Soham in June 1944. Jimmy was killed and Ben critically injured as they uncoupled a burning truck loaded with bombs, saving the town. Both were awarded the George Cross. Now, 37 years later, relations, railwaymen and people from Soham gathered at March station where British Rail named two Inter-City diesel locomotives after them. The Bishop of Ely blessed the engines and children from Soham Village College sang a hymn composed especially for the occasion. 86 09 25a & 29

1987 05 20

Estate agents, Cheffins Grain and Chalk are to merge with agricultural specialists Comins to form a new company. They will open a residential sales office in Soham and Cheffins will expand its Cambridge Machinery Sale. The merger occurs at a time of continuing turmoil within the estate agency business as national institutions take advantage of new rules to move on to the property scene. At least nine local agents have been involved in takeovers by banks, building societies or insurance companies. 87 05 20

1987 10 09

Railway line to St Ives & Soham station may be reopened – 87 10 09

1988 02 17

Three new railway stations at Cherry Hinton, Fulbourn and the Chittering area have been suggested in a County council report. But stations at Harston, Offord and Soham have been rejected on grounds of cost. British Rail plans to build a new 'parkway' station to the north of Cambridge to meet growing commuter passenger growth. But calls to re-open the Cambridge to St Ives freight line to passengers are firmly ruled out. It would cost £4.84 million, greatly outweighing potential income, consultants say 88 02 17

1988 05 16

Plans to close Wicken primary school have been rejected by county councillors after recently-elected Albert Lawrence persuaded them to let it stay open. It has only two classrooms and a falling number of pupils, which stands at 53. The hall is in a bad state of repair and will have to be closed in July. But unless more houses are built, the school cannot be sustained. Pupils would then transfer to Soham Church of England school though hopes of rebuilding there have been delayed by Government red tape. 88 05 16a

1990 07 05

St Ivel withdraw from its Hassy vegetable growing and packing business specialising in onions, salads etc at Soham – 90 07 05a

1990 08 15

Soham Downfields windmill produces flour – feature – 90 08 15c

Looking Back: Soham stories, compiled by Mike Petty